



## THOMAS HAIRE

*The Praying Plumber of Lisburn*

*by A. W. Tozer*

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# THE PRAYING PLUMBER OF LISBURN

*A Sketch of God's Dealings with Thomas Haire*

By

A. W. TOZER



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## Introduction

By DR. S. A. WYMER, President,  
Fort Wayne Bible College

**B**Y A remarkable providence this sketch of Tom Haire by A. W. Tozer brings together two men who in most ways are very much different but who in their affinity for things spiritual are very much alike. Accordingly, they have another characteristic in common: both are nonconformists, each fashioned by divine processes according to an individual pattern.

The significance of God-made men in the twentieth-century West can best be appreciated against the backdrop of our times. In this age of mass production and mass media of communication, when the stress in school and church, at least in America, is on social adjustment, the inevitable result is mediocre conformity. The product is a religious robot instead of a saint. "This world is not a friend to grace" takes on added meaning in our day, and it helps to explain why there are so few saintly Christians.

The orders of the Catholic Church have for centuries tried to produce saints by imposing a right regimentation of thought and conduct on the human spirit. While few Protestant groups have followed this procedure, yet the prevalent insistence on group conformity is just as deadly. The liberal can be identified by his affected intonation and his repetition of liberal clichés. The fundamentalist, indoctrinated in a particular school of orthodoxy, becomes an acceptable poll-parrot of verbalism. Even "holiness" preachers have their characteristic mode of expression—their badge of the spiritually elite.

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The human spirit, however, can only be stultified by this insistence on social conformity. It is a tragic misuse of freedom to use it for even the more refined types of enslavement. It must be set free by Christian redemption and servitude to Jesus Christ to find its realization in the boundless reaches of the Eternal. Fortunately, neither the subject nor the author of this sketch is a product of convention. Had either been, there would be no sketch, for there would have been nothing to write about on the one hand, and on the other, the author would not have had the insight to appreciate the spiritual stature of Tom Haire. Both were needed to produce this booklet—the deeply devout life of Brother Haire and the kindred spirit of Dr. Tozer speaking through his gifted pen.

How the plumber from Lisburn, Ireland, and the editor of *The Alliance Weekly* in Chicago were brought into an intimate understanding of one another is an extraordinary providence. The hotel fire that almost took the lives of Tom Haire and Evangelist Ravenhill is one link in a chain forged by divine purpose. How fellowship in things spiritual is gloriously possible is here demonstrated. Tom Haire the layman has little formal education while the author's erudition extends to many fields, but both in very much different ways are God-made men whose habitat is the heavenlies. There both are very much at home.

It has been my good fortune to know both the author and the subject of these chapters. Both men are enemies of exaggeration, pretense, sensationalism and window dressing. Accordingly, the sketch here published is an honest account forthrightly written. It has already been blessed to thousands of readers of *The Alliance Weekly*, and I earnestly pray that it will be used of God to bring many of His children into a closer fellowship with Himself.

One of the rarest experiences I have ever had was in prayer

## The Praying Plumber of Lisburn

By A. W. TOZER

### I

**Y**OU HAVE only to glance at his round red face and his twinkling blue eyes to guess the place of his birth. And when he smiles and says, "Guid marnih," there is no doubt left. Tom Haire is Irish.

Tom is not just somewhat Irish; he is so completely identified with the looks and ways and speech of the Emerald Isle that nothing on earth can ever change him. His soft, thick, almost fuzzy brogue reminds you of every Pat-and-Mike story you have ever heard, and the happy upside-down construction that often comes out when he talks sounds like the best of John M. Synge. It would take a keener ear than mine and greater literary skill than I possess to hear and reproduce in print the delightful if sometimes confusing dialect which is the only language Tom knows and in which he clothes his deeply spiritual and penetrating observations. So, except for an occasional Hibernicism in word or phrase which I consider too good to pass up, I shall make no attempt to copy his Irish speech. For the purposes of this sketch I shall let Tom speak in ordinary American English, though I admit we may lose something by so doing.

It is not with Tom Haire the Irishman that we are con-

with Tom Haire. As his hands clasped my hand with that of a distinguished churchman and theologian, he poured out his heart in prolonged intercession. Afterwards, this prelate and I agreed that this kind of prayer in its depth and height and breadth and insight was outside any human dimensions. Tom had not learned to pray in any school of human tutoring. We had been listening to a man converse with God who knew from the Spirit's tutoring the concerns of the Father's heart and the vocabulary of the heavenlies.

cerned here, however, but with Brother Tom Haire, the servant of Christ. So fully has he lost himself in God that the text "Not I, but Christ," actually seems to be a reality in his life. I think I have never heard him quote the text, but his whole being is a living exemplification of it. He appears to live the text each moment of each day.

After two years of growing acquaintance with and increasing appreciation of this man of faith I concluded that I owed it to the Christian public to share with them some of the good things God has given me through His servant Tom Haire. I have long felt and still feel that the practice of writing up living men and spreading them before the public is questionable. Especially is it bad when new converts are seized upon as gospel propaganda and paraded before the world as evidences of the truth of the Christian religion. Converted cowboys, opera stars and such have so completely captured the attention of the Christian public that it has become increasingly difficult to hold a sober view of the faith of our fathers. I do not want to contribute to this delinquency in any form, but I felt that a man who has been praying for fifty years as Tom has, and whose long godly life has been open to critical examination for that time, was safe material for a brief write-up. And besides, Tom is just a plumber, not a celebrity, so any interest he may arouse among Christians is bound to be spiritual.

After Tom is gone someone will undoubtedly write a book about him. In the meantime, there are thousands of persons who might profit by knowing something of his life and teachings now. So low has the level of spirituality fallen among the churches that it is imperative that every effort possible be made to raise it; and one effective way to inspire Christians to press onward into the deep things of God is to show them that there are a few saintly souls among us even now, that

the complexities and iniquities of the twentieth century have not wholly destroyed the art of prayer and spiritual communion of a Biblical quality. This knowledge may easily do more to encourage men and women in the pursuit of God than a thousand sermons could do.

When we consider how quick Christ and His apostles were to focus attention upon persons who were spiritually worthy, and that we are admonished in the Scriptures to emulate those who have risen to a place of unusual faith and godliness, there would seem to be no valid reason to withhold this sketch any longer. Tom will not see what is written until it appears in print; and if I know him as well as I believe I do he will not read it afterwards. Tom is like that.

After I had become convinced that something should be written about Tom, the next problem was to persuade him to agree to it. And that was not easy. When I broached the subject to him he demurred immediately. "They wanted to send reporters out to talk to me," he said, "but I wouldn't let them. I am only a plumber. All I have is from God and I don't want to let any man elevate me in any way." Then his red face became redder still, his eyes filled with tears and his voice got husky. "I'm afraid of losing me power with God," he whispered.

After I had explained to him that I felt he owed a debt to other Christians to let them know how good the Lord had been to him, and had promised that I would be careful to give him no glory or credit at all, Tom felt better about the matter and agreed to talk to me. Especially was he touched by the argument that he owed something to his fellow Christians. Tom loves God's people with a wonderful, radiant affection and is willing to do anything to bring a blessing to them.

Tom Haire was born sixty-six years ago in County Down,

## II

TOM HAIRE is a rare compound of deep, tender devotion, amazing good sense and a delightful sense of humor. There is about him absolutely nothing of the tension found in so many persons who seek to live the spiritual life.

Tom is completely free in the Spirit and will not allow himself to be brought under bondage to the rudiments of the world nor the consciences of other people. His attitude toward everyone and everything is one of good-natured tolerance if he does not like it, or smiling approval if he does. The things he does not like he is sure to pray about, and the things he approves he is sure to make matters of thanksgiving to God. But always he is relaxed and free from strain. He will not allow himself to get righteously upset about anything. "I lie near to the heart of God," he says, "and I fear nothing in the world."

That he lies near to God's heart is more than a passing notion to Tom. It is all very real and practical. "God opens His heart," he says, "and takes us in. In God all things are beneath our feet. All power is given to us and we share God's almightiness." He has no confidence at all in mankind, but believes that God must be all in all. Not even our loftiest human desires or holiest prayers are acceptable to God. "The river flows from beneath the throne," he explains, "and its source is not of this world. So the source of our prayers must be Christ Himself hidden in our hearts."

Though he counts heavily on the power of prayer he has no faith in the virtue of prayer itself as such. He warns against what he calls "merit-prayer," by which he means any

North Ireland ("Protestant Ireland," as Tom always carefully explains), and apart from two visits to the United States has lived all his life there. He is a member of the Episcopal Church of Ireland, the "disestablished" wing of the Episcopal Church whose worship is much simpler and less ornate than that of the Anglicans and which is evangelical in belief and evangelistic in spirit. He is a lay preacher and evangelist, but until recently stayed very close to Lisburn, his home, where his plumbing business is located. He was so busy with his business and his evangelistic work, he says with a twinkle, that he did not get around to finding a wife till he was thirty-nine years old. He has a married daughter, Margaret, whose husband now looks after Tom's business affairs. His wife has been dead for thirteen years.

The two characteristics that mark Tom Haire as unusual are his utter devotion to prayer and his amazing spiritual penetration. (And are not the two always closely associated?) Three months after his conversion, when he was sixteen years old, he formed the habit of praying four hours each day. This practice he followed faithfully for many years. Later he added one all-night prayer session each week. In 1930 these weekly all-night prayer times were increased to two, and in 1948 he settled down to the habit of praying three nights of every week. He gets along on very little sleep. In addition to the three nights each week that he stays awake to pray he is frequently awakened in the night seasons by a passage of Scripture or a burden of prayer that will not let him rest. "And almost always," he says, "the Lord wakens me early in the morning to pray."

prayer offered with the secret notion that there is something good in it which will impress God and which He must recognize and reward. Along with "merit-prayer" goes "merit-faith," which is the faith we think will in some way please God.

"Too many of God's people are straining for faith," says Tom, "and holding on hard trying to exercise it. This will never do at all. The flesh cannot believe no matter how hard it tries, and we only wear ourselves out with our human efforts. True faith is the gift of God to an obedient soul and comes of itself without effort. The source of faith is Christ in us. It is a fruit of the Spirit."

He flatly rejects the notion that we "can buy something with prayer." "God's gifts come from another source," he insists. "They are 'freely given,' and have no price attached. It is the goodness of God that gives us all things. God gives His free gifts generously to those of His children who bring themselves into harmony with His will. Then they have but to ask and He gives."

Brother Tom fasts quite often and sometimes the fast is prolonged for some time. But he scorns the thought that there is any merit in it. "Some people," says Tom with a shake of the head, "some people half kill themselves by ascetic practices. They imagine God to be so severe that He enjoys seeing them hungry. They go about pale and weak in the mistaken belief that they are making themselves dear to God. All such notions come from the flesh and are false." Once during a prolonged season of prayer he got suddenly thirsty and without a qualm of conscience broke off prayer and went out for a cup of tea. This got him into difficulties with certain fellow Christians who felt that he was surrendering to fleshly appetites. But he has dwelt so long in the spacious heart of God that he is unaffected by the scruples of others. God's heart

is no strait jacket even if some imperfectly taught saints insist on acting as if it were. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty."

Wherever there is a strain in the life we may be sure the flesh is operating. The Holy Spirit gives fruitful burdens but never brings strain. Our very eagerness to have our prayers answered may cause us to lapse into the flesh if we are not watchful. So Tom reasons. A woman sent for him recently and wanted him to pray for her healing. She was in very bad condition, but Tom would not pray. He detected in her eagerness to get well a bit of rebellion against the will of God. So he set about breaking her rebellion down. "Sister," he asked innocently, "and have you ever read the Scripture, 'Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints'? Sure, and you would not want to rob the Lord of all that preciousness, would you?" It was his way of telling her that she was not fit to live unless she was willing to die. The shock had its intended effect, and after some further conversation Tom felt that the woman had surrendered her will to God. Then he prayed for her healing. She received some help physically, and in addition she had also the benefit that comes from a new spiritual experience.

Tom holds back from the highly advertised healing meeting, but he ardently believes that an outpouring of the Holy Spirit on a life may easily result in physical healing. "Should God ever pour out His Spirit again upon all flesh," he says, "we may expect physical healings to accompany the outpouring. It is part of the divine pattern."

Tom's conception of prayer is so lofty and so different from the popular conception as to be something of another order entirely. To him prayer is a spiritual art, subject to divine laws which must be obeyed if our prayers are to achieve success. "Harmony" and "dominion" are two words that come

easily from his lips when talking about prayer. Once in a sermon I spoke of God's making man in His image. At the close of the service Tom spoke a word of approval of the sermon and then went on to develop the thought further. He called attention to the words occurring so close together, "image" and "dominion." "Do you notice," he asked, "how God made man in His own image and then gave him dominion? The dominion followed the image, and so it is with us now. Our dominion in prayer depends upon how much of the image of God we carry in our hearts. There must be complete harmony between the soul and God if we are to enjoy answered prayer. The degree of success we enjoy in prayer depends upon the image within us." Then he added a significant sentence: "For instance, God would not hear a man who would kick a dog."

### III

TOM HAIRE, on the whole, takes a very charitable attitude toward all his fellow Christians and toward every shade of doctrinal belief within the framework of evangelical Christianity.

He would not be classified as a teacher of divine healing but he has strong convictions about the believer's privileges in Christ as they touch his physical body. He believes that God sometimes gives a praying man the assurance of healing for someone else. "There is a sense in which a true Christian may receive healing for another," he says, "God using him as a channel through which He can pour Himself out upon the needy person." In Tom's theology the onus of failure when praying for the sick never falls upon the sick man. Those who do the praying are responsible to exercise faith for the one in need. That is quite a reversal of the current practice of heaping scorn upon the sick man because he cannot get up after he has been prayed for.

In prayer we need always to obtain the wisdom of the Spirit so that we may pray according to the will of God and not suffer discouragement from failure to see our desires realized. "When I get the mind of God," Tom insists, "I always get the answer. When the wisdom of God floods over my understanding I can take the sick man by the hand and tell him to get up."

But even here he will not allow himself to get under bondage. He seeks not to support a doctrinal bias but to discover and follow the will of God. He tells of praying once for the recovery of a Christian woman who he felt was greatly needed on earth. He was on his knees interceding for her when he

felt a check on his spirit. Then he thought he heard the Lord speaking in his heart. "Don't pray for her, Tom," the voice seemed to say, "I have prepared a big reception for her up here. I want her with Me." Tom immediately ceased to pray and began to celebrate the blessed reception about to be held in heaven for the departing sister. Shortly after this she went to be with Christ.

Brother Tom's prayer list is very long and contains among other things the names of many persons for whom he makes regular intercession. Once when going over his list before the Lord he came to the name of a dear friend who had lately died. "Being a Protestant," says Tom, "I took out my pencil and started to cross off his name, for I did not believe in praying for the dead. But the Lord spoke to me and said, 'No, Tom, do not cross him off. Just write after his name the word *Home!* You have not lost him!'" Tom happily obeyed, and while he did not again intercede for his friend, he never felt that he had died. The relationship between these two Christians had not been altered by the mere incident of death. This world and the one above are never far apart and sometimes they actually touch and intermingle. This has been the comforting belief of the sweetest saints of the ages, and Tom's experiences only seem to confirm the truth.

Anything that begins or ends in *self* is extremely hateful to Tom Haire. Self-righteousness, self-confidence and every other self-sin must be slain within us if we are to grow in the love of God. He goes back to the sixth chapter of Romans for his theology and insists that the doctrine become real in the life. To Tom the sanctified life is one that is dead indeed unto sin and alive unto God through Christ Jesus.

"A man is dead," he says, "when he no longer resists the will of God in anything. Dead men do not resist. You must go to God as a lamb, to obey, follow and die." Brother Tom sees a close relationship between dying and giving. "We must

come to God with our hands open. A man can't be crucified while he keeps his fists closed. Open your hands in generous giving and hold nothing back. Even tithing can be harmful if we unconsciously feel that the one tenth we have given is all that belongs to God. *Everything* is His; we own nothing at all. The tenth is only the amount we set aside for religious work. The other nine tenths are His also, but He graciously permits us to use it as we have need."

When Tom was a young man God filled him with the Holy Ghost and he has never forgotten it. But he does not rest upon an experience that happened so long ago. He believes that we should go on to be filled again and again as the need arises. "If I am filled in 1953," he explains, "in 1954 there will be new areas discovered in my life of which I was unaware. These, too, need to be filled and claimed for God by the sovereign Holy Ghost."

While discussing the doctrine and experience of the Holy Spirit with him I took occasion to inquire what he thought of the notion that everyone who is filled with the Spirit will speak in tongues. I knew that his views would be of great value because they spring out of fifty years of holy living and victorious praying. Here would be no mere theory nor prejudiced opinion, but a wise and spiritual word spoken out of long familiarity with the Holy Ghost.

To my blunt question, "Brother Tom, have you ever spoken with tongues?" he gave the answer smilingly and gently: "No. I have never spoken in tongues, but I do not 'forbid' anyone from doing so. I think, however, that I have been instrumental in leading many persons from tongues to love. You see, I do not need tongues. I can make myself clear to others with the one I have now, and God knows what I am saying before I utter a word. So of what use would tongues be to me?" It may be that someone has spoken a wiser word on this controversial subject, but if so I have not heard it.

## IV

FOR SINNERS and for defeated Christians Tom Haire feels only pity and a great sorrow of heart, but toward sin itself his attitude is one of stern, unsmiling hostility. To him sin is the cause of all our human woe, the veil that shuts us out from the blessed presence of God. It is never to be tolerated in any form by anyone who wishes to follow Christ.

From his view of sin it naturally follows that he holds repentance to be indispensable to salvation. His usually mild language becomes sharp and imperious as he calls his hearers to forsake iniquity and turn to God. For him there can be no compromise with wrongdoing. The seeking heart must make its eternal choice, either to serve sin and suffer the everlasting displeasure of God or to forsake all sin and enter into the divine fellowship through the mercies of Christ.

If you were to ask Tom what he considers the greatest hindrance to prayer he would answer instantly, Unconfessed sin. And in coming to God the first thing to deal with is sin in the life. But for all that, it never enters his mind that he can atone for his sins by any kind of penance or self-punishment. Forgiveness is a free gift of God based upon the work of Christ on the cross and is never to be had on any other terms than faith. When a sin has been forsaken and confessed it is at that moment forgiven, never to be remembered against us forever. No possible good can come from brooding over it. It is gone for good.

Learned theologians have a fancy name for the doctrine of sin. They call it "hamartiology." In all probability Tom would not recognize the word if he chanced to come upon it,

but his own hamartiology is fully adequate. He likes to recall that with God, forgiving and forgetting are the same thing. When God forgives, he forgets. Then Tom sums up his joyous personal theology in a single sentence, "If God forgets," he asks happily, "why should I remember?"

Tom has made two visits to the United States within the last few years. As he approached our shores for the first time he hid himself away on board the ship and sought the face of God in great earnestness to know what he should say to the "Americans." What God said to him, or what he seemed to hear God say to him, was so deep and wise that it should be seriously studied by every one of us. Whether it was the very voice of God or only the crystallization of a wisdom that had come to him through long years of praying matters not at all. It is too wise and wonderful to ignore.

"When you get to America," the Voice said within him, "don't get mixed up in doctrinal trifles. Don't pay any attention to their heads. Just look at their hearts. You will find their differences to be of the head; their similarities to be of the heart. So talk to their hearts. Don't read up on the religious situation in America. Don't try to fit into things or please people. Just talk to them straight out of your heart. Tell them the things I have told you, and you will get on all right." Fortunately Tom had the courage and good sense to obey these wise admonitions.

Tom Haire, like many another uneducated man, takes an attitude of meek deference toward all learning, and gazes with great respect upon any man he considers learned. But his confidence in his own kind of learning makes him bold to speak out even in the presence of the great. "My knowledge," he says, "has been all on the experiential plane. I have never had the slightest interest in theology as a mere theory. There is an anointing which teaches all things so that we need not

that any man teach us." This attitude he holds in complete humility without bigotry and without arrogance. Once I talked to him about the views held by certain unbelieving intellectuals that seemed to contradict his views. He advanced no arguments to support his position. He bowed his head and spoke in a low voice: "But they've never been where I've been," he said simply.

I have not felt free to ask Tom outright what books he has read. I only know that I have never seen him with any book except the Bible. It is altogether safe to assume that he has not read any of the devotional writers of the ages, yet his whole spiritual outlook is that of an evangelical mystic. There is a catholicity about him that would have made him completely at home with the great saints of the past. He could have preached to the birds along with Francis of Assisi (though his practical Irish mind would likely have inquired, "Shure, and what is the guild of it all?"). He might have sung across England with Richard Rolle, or sat in silence with George Fox, or preached in a cemetery with John Wesley. And when the fiery logic of Charles Finney had devastated a congregation Tom might have come among the terrified seekers with his Bible and his wise words of instruction and led them straight to God.

The spiritual outlook of this twentieth century Irishman is so near to that of the fourteenth century Germans, Eckhart and Tauler, and the seventeenth century Frenchman, Fénelon, as to create a suspicion that he may be indebted to their writings for many of his ideas. But such is positively not the case. In all our dozens of conversations and our long prayer seasons together he has never so much as mentioned their names, nor has he ever quoted from their writings so much as one sentence. To him they simply do not exist. The only explanation for the remarkable resemblance between these Christian

men so far removed in time is that the same Holy Spirit taught all of them, and where He can find listening ears He always teaches the same things. There is a unity of spiritual beliefs among men of the Spirit that jumps centuries, denominational gulfs and doctrinal hedges and perfects a communion of saints in spite of every effort of devil or man to keep them apart.

have not in one single instance seen him act otherwise than like a Christian.

It was the doctrine of the Wesleyan theologians that a man can be perfected in love and yet be imperfect in other phases of his life, that perfect love does not necessarily imply perfect judgment. Tom Haire appears to me to be a fine proof of the truth of this doctrine. His glowing love for God and men, his utter devotion to prayer and praise, have yet left him open to errors of judgment much as any of us. He is the first one to mention this, and is keenly aware of the necessity to lean hard on God that he may be saved from serious mistakes.

For instance, Tom is much more generous with his affections than I could feel free to be, but in the light of the practices of godly men and women of the past and the admonitions of the Scriptures concerning the holy kiss, he may be right and I wrong. It is not uncommon to see him greet a Christian brother with an old-fashioned hug and kiss. Some might list this as a fault, but if so, it cannot be too serious, and getting kissed by Brother Tom is like being caressed by all your godly ancestors at once.

I have also known Tom to fall asleep during some of his prolonged seasons of prayer. William T. MacArthur used to say that under certain circumstances the most religious thing a man could do was to go to sleep, and I have no doubt that Tom's occasional cat nap while stretched before the Lord in the long night watches may be God's merciful provision for His servant's health. Once while trying to stay through an all-night season of prayer with him and a few others I learned by experience what such praying costs. Sometime after midnight I petered out and slipped off to my study for a snooze. At eight o'clock the next morning I waked to hear Tom leaving the church. He had lasted out the night and I, though much younger than he, had surrendered to the sandman long before!

## V

It is important to any proper understanding of the grace of God in the life of His servant, Thomas Haire, that we do not think of him as a plaster saint or as a mystic dreamer far removed from the rough and downright world where we live. He has not fled the world to escape it; better than flight has been his deliverance from it while living in the midst of it.

I have wanted to be altogether fair in presenting this sketch. To eulogize at the expense of accuracy would be to defeat the very end I am trying to attain, namely, to show what God can do for a man if the man will but place himself in His hands. Were the object of this sketch a perfect man the effect would be to discourage us completely. The pale wax saint who never knew human imperfections could not inspire us to godliness. Even Christ had to be tempted in all points like as we are, and the high priests of the Temple must themselves be compassed with infirmity if they were to know how to have compassion on the ignorant and them that were out of the way.

It is my desire to present here both sides of the ledger, to show the credit side certainly, and then to exhibit the debit side to get a balanced picture.

Probably the best commentary on the life and character of God's Irish servant is to say that after two years of rather intimate acquaintance with him I am unable to dig up anything of any consequence to write on the debit side of his life. I have seen him in the most trying circumstances, undergoing tests that would have tried the character of an angel, and I

It is only fair to say, too, that Tom is sometimes capable of prejudice that is something less than scholarly. He insists, for instance, that the King James Version of the Scriptures is the only proper one for a Christian to read. "I know it is only a translation," he argues, "but God breathed on the translators as He did on no others, and thus preserved them from error. Of course," he adds meditatively, "they did call the Holy Spirit 'it' in the eighth chapter of Romans. But that was just a mistake." There you have it. The translators were divinely preserved from error, but they made a mistake! That comes perilously near to being an Irish bull, but if one is to be committed, who could better qualify for it than the man from County Antrim, Ireland?

Sometimes also Tom can become very much of a tease. He particularly loves to josh his American friends about the inferiority of all things American to everything Irish. After his accident at the hotel fire in Chicago I went to see him often. He lay cruelly crushed by the long fall to the concrete pavement. His hip and thigh were fractured, his back broken in several places and one of his hands burned severely. He lay in what must have been harsh, grinding pain. To afford what assurance I could I bent close to his ear and told him that we had secured for him one of the best orthopedic surgeons obtainable. For all his great pain he managed a sly grin. "Ye mean he is one of the bust in Amurica," he whispered, "but don't forget, we have butter ones in Ireland."

Tom is not a finished speaker by any means, but in an average message he manages to throw off so many sparks of real inspiration that his hearers forget everything but the wonder of the truth he is proclaiming. His messages tend to be circular, that is, they travel around to the same thought again and again. He reminds me of the advice given to a young preacher to the effect that if he was going to harp on one

string he should make that string a humdinger! Tom's string is love, fastened between the two pegs of faith and prayer. And that string is so long and so vibrant that it is seldom monotonous to listen to no matter how many times you hear it.

In my effort to escape the charge of writing an extravagant panegyric I have combed through my knowledge of Tom Haire to try to find some flaw in his godly life. The fact that I could discover no more than is mentioned here is probably a finer commendation than the most eloquent eulogium could ever be.

## VI

LEONARD RAVENHILL, the English evangelist, opened a series of meetings in the church where I have been pastor for some years, and as usual brought along Tom Haire as a companion and prayer helper. The two men are as different as night and day, the evangelist being a veritable son of thunder and Tom a gentle, affectionate soul who will listen to anyone's troubles as long as necessary and permit himself to be taken advantage of without limit just to be sure he will not miss someone who may actually be in need of help. The fiery Englishman bears patiently with the slow, smiling Irishman. Each one makes up what the other lacks and together they make a remarkable team.

Tom had not been long among us till he began to sense the spiritual condition of the people. "The trouble I find here," he said after a while, "is not gross sin of a fleshly kind, but sin on a higher, spiritual level." And this "higher" kind of sin was to him very much more serious. Pride, self-confidence, refined unbelief, worldly-mindedness—these are far more destructive and much harder to get at than those cruder sins which are the stock in trade of evangelistic preaching. Thereafter Tom's prayers followed very closely the direction indicated by the specific needs of the people. Tom doesn't like to waste prayer.

This habit of carefully surveying the situation before setting out to pray about things is characteristic of Tom Haire. To him prayer is a science whose laws can be learned. Praying itself is not a shot in the dark, not a net cast into the sea with

the hope of a good catch. Praying is working along with God in the fulfillment of the divine plan. Praying is fighting close up at the front where the sharp deciding action is taking place.

According to Tom, there is such a thing as strategic prayer, that is, prayer that takes into account what the devil is trying to accomplish and where he is working, and attacks him at that strategic point. "Don't waste your time praying around the edges," he says. "Go for the devil direct. Pray him lose from souls. Weaken his hold on people by direct attack. Then your prayers will count and the work of God will get done."

Tom makes much of the believer's authority in Christ. Over the protests of the cautious expositor, he appropriates Scripture that might be proved to belong to a future age. "God says we are kings and priests," he declares, "and what is a king without a kingdom? There is a sphere where we can have full dominion in prayer. Complete authority is ours. We only need to ask and we shall receive." If this were mere theory we might dismiss it as being simply an error in interpretation, but it has been proved in the fires of practical living. God has given to His praying servant great power to command, to demand, and the results have been and are many and unusual.

One lesson we may learn from this man is to pray intelligently and with planned direction. When he cannot find the will of God about a thing he is as helpless as any man, but once he knows what God wants him to ask in prayer his voice takes on bold assurance. A young doctor in our congregation became suddenly ill with an acute form of hepatitis. He was taking advanced work in a Chicago hospital before returning to Ethiopia for his second term as a missionary. We asked Tom to pray for him, and he prayed dutifully but without

much assurance. "God has not told me what He wants to do," he repeated again and again. "I have not heard from God about this." Shortly thereafter the doctor lapsed into a coma and in a few days died, leaving a wife and child and an empty place on his mission field. No one could fathom the ways of God in it all, but it did not stagger Tom. God had operated after His own hidden purpose, and for this once He had withheld His secret from all of us. "All I know about it," said Tom, shaking his head solemnly, "is that God must have had some strong reason for wanting His servant with Him." Some of us who have lived close to this man believe that if God had wanted to keep the doctor here on earth He would have told Tom.

Like many another plain believer who has sat at the feet of Christ longer than he has sat before books on theology, Tom tends to great simplicity in everything. All those fine shadings of truth that slow down so many highly educated persons are lost on Tom. To him there are just two forces in the universe, God and Satan, and if a specific phenomenon does not originate with one it will be found to have originated with the other. That may be oversimplification, but it puts an edge on his axe and gets results.

For one who fights as many battles as does this Irishman he is remarkably restful and self-possessed. Or better say, God-possessed, for his tranquillity is not natural: it is a divine thing. One of his favorite words is "relax." He cannot see the good of tension anywhere. "Climb up into the arms of God," he says, "and relax. Getting things from God is as natural as breathing. When we pray we exhale; when we take the answer we inhale. Prayer is simply a restful inhaling and exhaling in the Spirit of God."

It is significant that Dr. A. B. Simpson in his day taught

the same truth in almost the same words. A stanza of one of his songs runs like this:

*I am breathing out my longings  
In Thy listening, loving ears;  
I am breathing in Thy answers,  
Stillling every doubt and fear.*

This becomes all the more remarkable when it is remembered that Tom Haire never came under the influence of A. B. Simpson. He never heard him preach nor read one of his books. It can only be explained as the same Spirit saying the same thing to different men who listen to His voice with equal care.

the last few minutes. The sister replied that she did not know. "But," she added, "as I helped to bring in one elderly man who had been hurt in the fire, he patted my cheek and asked me if I loved Jesus." We did not need to ask further. We had found Tom.

Both Mr. Ravenhill and Mr. Haire had been seriously injured by the long jump to the pavement from the third story window of the hotel. Both had broken bones in many parts of their bodies, Tom suffered deep burns on one hand and Ravenhill received internal injuries.

Nothing else within the sphere of my own experience has demonstrated so beautifully the real quality of present-day Christians as did the hotel accident suffered by the two evangelists. The news wires carried the story to every part of the United States and Canada and finally to England and Ireland. Immediately telegrams and long distance calls began to flood in to my office from far parts of the continent. Churches wrote to offer assistance; Christian nurses and doctors volunteered their aid; visitors came in great numbers and prayer went up like incense from coast to coast. The two men hovered for a while between life and death and then slowly began to get well. Whatever cynical unbelief may say, there are many persons who believe that the multitude of intercessions made for others were returning on the heads of God's servants. For everyone who says, "Why did this happen to praying men?" there are others who exclaim, "How could mortal man come through all this and still live?" By every natural evidence they should have died. That they are alive today is due to the kindness of God and the determined prayers of God's people.

The weeks spent in St. Bernard Hospital revealed the workings of God in many ways. Since this sketch concerns Mr. Haire I shall focus attention upon him mainly, though it

## VII

It was four o'clock of a bitterly cold November morning when the telephone rang and an excited voice told me that the Norwood Hotel was burning and the guests were fleeing into the street in their night clothes to escape the flames.

Leonard Ravenhill, the English evangelist, and his prayer helper, Tom Haire, who were engaged in evangelistic meetings in our local church, were stopping at the Norwood. My informant could tell me nothing about these men. He only knew that some guests had died in the fire and others had been badly injured.

In a few minutes one of the elders of the church picked me up and together we raced over the icy streets to the scene of the fire. The police and firemen had the area blocked off. The basement of the First Nazarene Church, located within one block of the hotel, had been converted into a first-aid station and the less seriously injured victims of the fire were being cared for there. A hurried search among the shivering and frightened persons who had gathered in the church basement failed to discover either Ravenhill or Haire. The excited guests could not tell us anything about them, but some thought that the two men had been among the victims who had jumped from the hotel windows.

The next logical place to look was St. Bernard Hospital, a few blocks away. There the scene was one of confusion. We stopped one of the hurrying sisters and inquired whether two Protestant evangelists had been admitted to the hospital in

should be said also that some of the experiences of Evangelist Ravenhill were not less wonderful.

It was not long before the news had spread through the hospital that a Protestant "saint" had come among them. Nurses, doctors, supervisors and "sisters" of various kinds came to see Tom for themselves. Some of them admitted that they had not been aware that such men as Tom were still to be found running loose. Though their teachings forbade them to believe that Tom was a real Christian, their yearning hearts were better and more charitable than their dogmas, and they soon accepted him not as a Christian only but as a superior saint who could teach them the things of the Spirit.

Among those who visited Tom was a distinguished professor of philosophy at Notre Dame University. He came not to try to convert Tom but to hear from his mouth the wonders of a life of prayer and worship. In the course of his conversations he admitted that he was very much dissatisfied with the kind of Christian being produced within the Catholic fold. "They come to me and confess their sins," he said, "and then go back and do the same things again. I do not believe in that kind of religion. When a man comes to Christ he should come with John the Baptist repentance." This may sound trite to the average evangelical, but coming from a highly placed prelate of the Roman Church it is little less than astounding. And the whole experience suggests that there may be many others enmeshed in the toils of Romanism who would look our way if we presented more examples of true godliness to catch their attention.

Tom's experience in the hospital was not without humorous incidents, though Tom was extremely careful never to give offense to the Catholic personnel. One Friday he suddenly developed an appetite for meat and called a nurse to him. "I say, suster," he began, "I crave a wee piece o' roast chicken

D'ye suppose ye cud get me some?" The nurse said No. It was Friday, and besides, chicken was not served to patients in that hospital. That was final. But Tom persisted. "But, suster. Ye don't know who I am! Tomorrah the British consul is comin' to see me. And besides that, look at the green light above me bed, put there in honor of auld Ireland. Now do I get some chucken?" Tom's blue eyes were twinkling. The consul's visit was scarcely to be in honor of Tom, and the green light above the bed surely had no remote relation to Tom's birthplace. The nurse left the room shaking her head doubtfully. After a while she reappeared all smiles, and on a tray she carried a plate laden with roast chicken. Tom ate the meal with relish. He undoubtedly enjoyed it, but more than all he enjoyed the fact that he had gotten roast chicken in a Catholic hospital on Friday.

One day as a supervisor was in his room, Tom suddenly asked her to pray for him. She promised she would go immediately to the chapel and say a prayer for him. But that would not do. "No," Tom insisted, "I want you to pray for me now. Right here." The surprised sister scrambled around in her voluminous bag and came up with a prayer book out of which she read a prayer. Then to be sure she would not leave, Tom grabbed her hand and hung on. "Now, suster, I'll pray for you." Then he launched into one of his tender, impassioned prayers while the sister stood reverently with bowed head. When he was through there was awe in her voice as she said, "That wasn't a memorized prayer, was it, Tom? That came right out of your heart. The Holy Ghost must have given you that." Until the day breaks and the shadows flee away it will not be revealed how much was accomplished through the suffering man of God by such faithful witnessing among persons who for all their blindness are at least reverent and serious-minded.

When the men were recovered sufficiently to be moved, a United States Army ambulance plane flew them to New York where they were the guests of the army for one day. Then they were flown overseas to their respective homes in England and Ireland.

In a few months, much improved physically, Tom came back to the United States. When all financial matters had been adjusted and the time was ripe to settle his accounts, Tom called on his doctor to pay the bill. The doctor looked him over and waited to hear what he would say. He had been told that he could expect a request for a discount. He was definitely not prepared for what he was to hear.

"Now, Doctor," Tom began, "I want to settle up with you. I understand that you expect me to ask for a discount on my bill on the grounds that I am a Christian worker. But, Doctor, I shall do nothing of the kind. You see, I am connected with the Deity and I run my business on the same principles as God runs His. God never asks for discounts. His method is to give full measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over. And I want to do the same. Here is a signed check made out to you. Only the amount is left blank. Now you take it, write in any amount you please and it will be honored. And I'd rather you made it too much than too little."

This was more than the Catholic surgeon could stand. He broke down and wept, threw his arms around Tom and kissed him like a son. "I have never seen a Christian like you before in all my life, Tom. Here, hand me the check." Then he deducted \$250 from the total bill and wrote in the reduced amount.

While Tom was going through the long siege of suffering after his accident he was forced for the first time in years to give up his habit of praying three nights each week. He missed having these long seasons of intercession, but he did

not let it bother him nor did he allow himself to get under bondage because he could not pray as before. God knew that His servant would be back at his regular habit as soon as he could, and Tom knew that He knew and understood. Between friends there are some things that can be taken for granted.

One day not long ago Tom came shuffling into the church, his face shining a bit more than usual and his voice full of excitement like a boy that had just received a sled or a pony for his birthday. The reason for his new joy was that God had enabled him to go back to his old habit of all-night prayer again! He feels so much "butter," he says, that he can stay up all night now without any trouble.

But Tom will probably never again be able to kneel before God as he had been doing for fifty years. The crushed pelvis and the broken back are "butter," it is true, but they will not permit him to bend very much at best. He must now do his praying sitting up for the most part, though when he is by himself he often stretches full length on the floor as he goes over his long prayer lists or worships the Lord in the beauty of holiness. I have come upon him sometimes lying prone before the Lord quietly wrestling against the evil one whom he calls "Seten." And so completely free is he that when he is interrupted in prayer by the unexpected entrance of a friend, he simply breaks off his praying, scrambles to his feet and enters into a relaxed and delightful conversation about anything that the visitor may have on his mind. Tom will talk about anything, but he is never so keen nor so original as when talking about the goodness of God and the power of prayer.

The doctors have told Tom that his accident has probably prolonged his life many years by forcing a long rest just at the period in his life when his heart stood in need of it. Of course

such a matter is in the hand of God and any prediction of longevity would be altogether rash and foolhardy. But one thing is sure: whether he stays among us for many years or slips off to heaven tomorrow is not of any consequence to Tom. He has lived so long on the portico of heaven that he will feel quite at home when the Father comes out and invites him inside.

## The Secret of Successful Praying

By TOM HAIRE

### VIII

**A**S NEVER before I feel the great need for intense research into the deeper mysteries of prayer.

I see on the distant horizon truth which, if I can attain to through grace, should to some degree shake hell and retard its outpourings into the world and the Church in our day. This truth lies mainly in John 17 (verses 21-23): "That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me."

The purpose that lies in this passage, as I see it, is that the world may come to believe in Christ. The condition is that we believers grow more perfectly into harmony with and correspondence to the Deity. This is a restoration to that state enjoyed by our first parents before the Fall. It is described by the words, "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him." In the next sentence God said, "Have dominion." Those who are in the divine

image have divine authorization to subdue the earth. The means by which this authority is exercised is prayer.

The first Adam failed. He was but a creature of God. The new creation which is brought into being through the work of Christ in atonement is *born* of God and receives His true nature, so that the fullness of the Godhead indwells the human personality. This is a distinct advance over the position enjoyed by the first Adam. The human personality becomes the outward instrument of the Almighty Inworker. If this becomes true in actual experience, then the "subduing" and the "dominion" should be made factual in the earth wherever our prayer rights are exercised in faith.

That a Spirit-led Christian can actually do the very work of Christ is plainly taught in the Scriptures. Paul said, "To me to live is Christ." John said, "As he is, so are we in this world." And I think we have hardly yet dared to face the mighty implications in the words of our Lord in John 14: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father" (verse 12).

Sometimes I imagine I am a bottle filled to the utmost; then I think I am that bottle in the middle of the waters before the firmament was created or the dry land appeared, with infinite miles of grace beneath me and around me in all directions. The little bottle doubts sometimes through the suggestions of the serpent. Will there be enough water to keep it filled and to float it safely forever? But the doubts are only for a moment. Thank God there is always enough in Christ!

As in the Garden there was a serpent, so now there are serpents to tempt God's redeemed people. Only now the dark serpents have been joined by white ones. The dark ones are on Skid Row and are terrible because of their fright-

ful physical manifestations such as drinking, dope addiction and other such gross sins. The white ones are of the same nature as the others, but are illuminated by "the angel of light" who transforms them into white ones with supernatural power to work in human personalities. These may lead people to speak with the tongues of angels, foretell the future, understand all mysteries and be driven with a passionate desire for the attainment of all knowledge.

Our colleges, sad to think, are alive with white serpents, moving men to seek honor among men, such honor as superior learning brings. It is difficult to get prayer into its primary place in our colleges, even in our Christian colleges. The head, the voice, the dress, the gestures—these take first place and are eagerly cultivated. But we can never cast out devils with the intellect, however cultured. Even casting out devils may be counterfeited by the devil, who will withdraw his power for a moment to deceive the unwary. Casting out devils, speaking wonderful words or moving mountains may be no evidence at all of true Christianity. "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (Mat. 7:22-23).

Martyrdom without love will prove to be a snare. Giving my body to be burned or starving it by fasting is in direct violation of the command of God in creation. "Give ye them to eat" is in harmony with the purpose of God, for He made many things to be used for food for mankind. True fasting is the result of spiritual preoccupation, as when Moses went into the Mount and continued without food for forty days. He did not need food then, for he was seeing God's face. The sins of Aaron and the people of Israel lay heavily on his

heart and crowded out the desire for food. He spent his days in intercession. I think he saw by faith the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world, and as he moved into spiritual union with the Lamb he was enabled to intercede successfully for Israel. God answered with the most wonderful words ever spoken to man: "I have pardoned according to thy word." Moses was offered the opportunity to become greater than the sinning multitude, but in declining this offer and identifying himself with Israel he came into spiritual harmony with the Lamb who was later to give His life for His sinning friends. Is this what Paul meant when he expressed a desire to be "made conformable" unto His death?

Fasting and faith are to be secondary always. Perhaps I should say, conscious faith and purposive fasting. We are commanded to "have the faith of God." This is a result of a loving understanding of the mind of God and comes as He sits beside the refining vessel and skims off the dross from our natures. Then we see His face and understand the purpose behind the refining fire and believe Him without effort. God thus gives the gift of affinity. It is a kind of spiritual birth within us and is accompanied by love. God is love and without love everything else is vain.

It is impossible to overemphasize the importance of love in the Christian life. Though I have all faith and have not love I am as salt that has lost its savor. Love cannot sin, for God is love and God can never sin. Love is a fire that consumes sin. The Church clamors for mountain-removing faith and meritorious praying and fasting, but if all this is secretly to be used to attain fame among the saints then it is inspired by the white serpent. Christ prayed all night because He was drawn irresistibly to it as by a magnet within Him. It was the result of an irresistible urge rather than of conscious purpose. He that saith he abideth in Him ought to

The secret power of prayer is affinity with Christ and conformity to His image. The urge to pray must come from God and not from our own ambition. Increasing measure of Christ-likeness will mean increased power in prayer. Then when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.

922 PAM  
H24 702

Tozer, Aiden Wilson  
The praying plumber of Lisburn

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